

# Evaluation summary

## *Conservation and sustainable management of the Gran Chaco*

Country/Countries: Argentina, Bolivia and Paraguay

Topic: Climate Change

Assessed by: **ONF Andina**

Assessment date: **March 2020**

### Key FFEM support data

**Project name:** Gran Chaco

**Project number:** CZZ 1683

**Amount financed by the FFEM:** 1 500 00 EUR

**Project grant date:** 5/07/2012

**Duration:** 8 years (2012-2020)

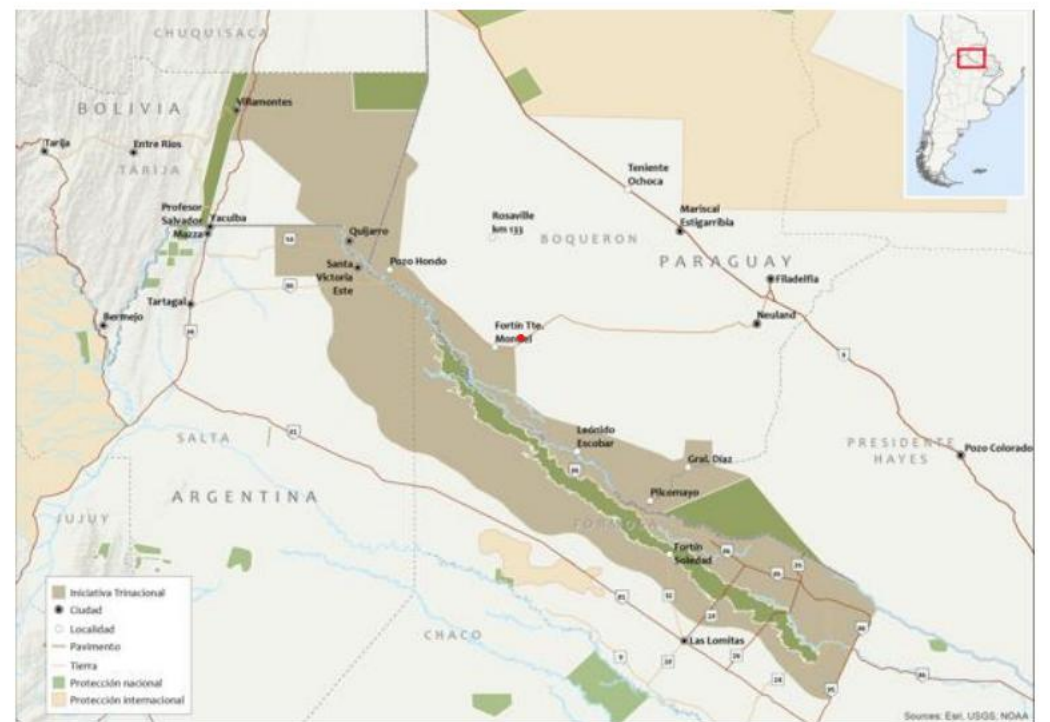
### Context

The Gran Chaco is a vast geographical area shared between northern Argentina, southeastern Bolivia, northwestern Paraguay, and southeastern Brazil. It is the second largest forested area after the Amazon and is home to internationally recognized fauna and flora. With great social diversity, the Chaco includes many Indigenous groups, rural communities, large landowners, and growing cities, though these urban areas have not erased the region's strong rural character.

The pressures exerted by "extractive" economic activities threaten natural resources (land, forests, water). The exploitation of hydrocarbon deposits, the development of increasingly intensive agriculture, and the clearing of large grasslands within the forest all cause damage, both environmentally and socioeconomically. This development model degrades resources in an unsustainable way, endangering the population and the activities that sustain them.

### Participants and operating methods

Three foundations (Pro Yungas in Argentina, Nativa in Bolivia, and Moisés Bertoni in Paraguay) joined forces to create the Tri-national Initiative for the Conservation of the Pilcomayo (ITP). Project management was entrusted to the association of these three foundations, with Pro Yungas (FPY) acting as lead partner and coordinator.



### Objectives

#### Main objective

To contribute to the sustainable management of natural resources in the middle Pilcomayo River basin, based on local socioeconomic development in balance with the area's environmental potential.

#### Specific objectives

- Promote the creation of a regional area for sustainable development and conservation within the middle Pilcomayo River basin;
- Contribute to reducing forest and land degradation processes by carrying on operations for local economy development;
- Share and promote the project's results and experiences across Gran Chaco;
- Contribute to knowledge and information on deforestation and forest degradation processes, with a view to presenting REDD+ projects line with national policy guidelines.

## Performance appraisal

### Relevance

The analysis of relevance showed that this project fully addressed the challenges of growing pressure on the region's resources, exacerbated by the effects of climate change, as well as the need to turn it into a region of sustainable socio-economic development without endangering its population and the resources it harbors.

### Coherence

The coherence of the project was judged overall to be satisfactory.

### Effectiveness

The analysis of effectiveness revealed mixed results depending on the components: while the first three objectives were generally achieved, the contribution to knowledge and information on deforestation and forest degradation processes, with a view to presenting REDD+ projects in line with national policy guidelines, was only weakly addressed during the project.

### Efficiency

The project's efficiency was judged overall to be satisfactory.

### Impact

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The stakeholders affected by the project were diverse and became increasingly numerous over the course of the project. The project produced a "stakeholder map" illustrating this diversity, which included in particular:

- Public institutions: the project appears to have successfully engaged local authorities in its intervention sites (municipalities, regions) and influenced their policies or activities; collaborations also developed with technical or research organizations;
- NGOs operating in the area: many joint actions were carried out; the project also contributed to strengthening REDES Chaco, which brings together all the territory's stakeholders;
- Producers' associations: these played a decisive role in the project. Thanks to six years of consistent support, the project truly contributed to strengthening them and fostering ownership of the proposed changes in their organizational and production systems.

### Viability/Sustainability

The value chains supported by the project already existed in the region, and the assistance provided clearly strengthened certain communities and associations. The improvements made to production systems and marketing practices have been adopted and valued by producers and are very likely to be sustained over time.

### Added value of FFEM support

The main aspects constituting the added value of FFEM were:

- The tri-national dimension;
- The ethnic diversity and management of biodiversity based on different cultural knowledge systems;
- The ecological coherence of the intervention area and its exceptional environmental character;
- The flexibility in intervention methods, allowing priority to be given to the effectiveness of actions and the integration of local stakeholders.

## Recommendations & learnings

**Technical Assistance (TA) Mechanism:** This type of support should be maintained and further developed. Beyond organizational and reporting aspects, TA should also cover the technical areas in which the implementing partners are most vulnerable (in this case, forestry issues).

**Governance:** The governance model must more clearly define how operators coordinate with each other. A general project coordinator is essential, in addition to country and/or thematic coordinators.

**Project Selection:** A transparent and well-argued mechanism for selecting pilot projects is desirable. This should make it possible to identify the criteria against which the effectiveness of the pilot initiatives will be assessed.

**Adjustment of the Logical Framework and Establishment of a Baseline:** It is essential to revise the logical framework at the start of the project to ensure that each implementing partner understands it fully and designs their contribution to the Annual Operational Plan accordingly. Establishing a baseline is necessary in order to compare project results against this initial state.

**Financial Management:** Direct disbursements to each operator should be prioritized when beneficiaries are located in several countries and working with different currencies. Beyond an initial "testing" period for operators, the amount of disbursements should be sufficient to allow annual implementation and reduce the number of disbursement requests. An initial training of operators' administrative staff by AFD's financial department would likely be beneficial.

**Reporting:** Activity reports should reflect the entirety of the project, not only the activities funded by the FFEM, whether for technical or financial aspects.

**Possible Continuation of the Project:** Detailed characterization of the Chaco forests remains a key issue: capacities for timber and non-timber forest product production and carbon storage. The impacts of undergrowth enrichment models for grazing should be measured and compared with alternative practices.

Scaling up the pilot experiences could build on an inventory of associations and communities sharing the same initial conditions as the ones involved, as well as on broader engagement of large producers (Mennonites, major landowners, agro-industrial companies)